

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 0082

FOR ARA ROGERS FROM AMB JOVA

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PFOR MX

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH FORMER PRESIDENT MIGUEL ALEMAN

1. WHILE AT ACAPULCO I WAS INVITED TO HAVE A PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH FORMER PRESIDENT, MIGUEL ALEMAN, WHO, THOUGH NOT GROWING ANY YOUNGER, IS STILL ACTIVE IN MEXICAN LIFE AND, IN EFFECT, IS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE INTERESTS OF THE BUSINESS AND MORE CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS WITHIN THE MEXICAN POLITICAL STRUCTURE.

2. WHILE AT FIRST ALEMAN SPOKE RATHER OBLIQUELY ABOUT THE PRESENT POLITICAL SITUATION, AS THE CONVERSATION WENT ON HE WARMED UP AND SPOKE WITH CONSIDERABLE FRANKNESS. HIS DISTRUST AND DISLIKE OF PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA CAME THROUGH VERY STRONGLY. HE WENT SO FAR AS TO TELL ME AN ANECDOTE OF EX-PRESIDENT DIAZ ORDAZ WHO, AS THE ONE WHO CHOSE ECHEVERRIA AS HIS SUCCESSOR, NOW FEELS THAT HE MUST ASK THE FORGIVENESS OF THE MEXICAN PEOPLE FOR HAVING MADE SUCH A MISTAKE.

3. ALEMAN SAID THAT THE COMING MONTHS WERE DELICATE ONES FOR MEXICO, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT ECHEVERRIA HAS ASKED FOR A SPECIAL SESSION OF
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CONGRESS WHICH MUST INDICATE THAT HE INTENDS TO

CONTINUE PUSHING THROUGH LEGISLATIVE MEASURES IN THE LAST MONTHS OF HIS PRESIDENCY. ALEMAN SAID THIS WAS MOST UNUSUAL UNDER THE MEXICAN SYSTEM, AS IN ALL PAST OCCASIONS, ONLY THE MOST URGENT LEGISLATIVE MEASURES WERE TAKEN DURING THE LAST YEAR OF A PRESIDENCY. IN THE PAST IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THOUGHT IMPORTANT TO AVOID THE "CONFUSION" OF A RETIRING PRESIDENT PUTTING FORTH MEASURES WHILE THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE WAS BUSY MAKING POSSIBLY CONFLICTING POLICY SPEECHES IN OTHER PARTS OF THE NATION. ALEMAN SAID HE MUST BE CHARITABLE AND TRUST THAT ECHEVERRIA HAD REQUESTED THIS LEGISLATIVE SESSION IN GOOD FAITH AND THAT THE COUNTRY WAS NOT IN FOR SOME UNPLEASANT SURPRISES FROM A LAME DUCK PRESIDENT OPERATING WITH A LAME DUCK CONGRESS.

4. REGARDING THE CANDIDATE, LOPEZ PORTILLO, ALEMAN SEEMED REASONABLY SATISFIED AS HIS EXPERIENCE AS SECRETARY OF FINANCE AND HIS PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES IN THE SECRETARIAT OF THE PRESIDENCY SHOULD STAND HIM IN GOOD STEAD. HE THOUGHT HE WOULD BE CONSIDERABLY LESS IMPULSIVE THAN ECHEVERRIA AND THAT HIS DECISIONS WOULD BE LESS AFFECTED BY PERSONAL EMOTIONS. IN ANSWER TO MY QUESTION REGARDING THE PROBABLE FOREIGN AFFAIRS POSTURE OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT, ALEMAN SAID THAT WE MUST WAIT; THAT HE FEARED THAT THE PATTERN WAS NOW SET AND THAT WE WOULD FIND LOPEZ PORTILLO FOLLOWING SIMILAR FOREIGN POLICIES TO THOSE OF ECHEVERRIA. HERE TOO, HOWEVER, HE WOULD BE LESS STRIDENT AND LESS WOUNDING, AND IN ANY CASE, IT WOULD BE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO BE EVEN MORE OBNOXIOUS THAN ECHEVERRIA IN THIS FIELD.

5. LOOKING AT THE FUTURE ALEMAN SAID THAT UNDOUBTEDLY MEXICO'S GREATEST PROBLEMS WOULD LIE IN POPULATION PRESSURES AND IN THE NEED TO INDUSTRIALIZE IN ORDER TO PROVIDE JOBS IN EVER GROWING NUMBERS. FOR THESE REASONS HE HAD ALWAYS ADVOCATED RESPONSIBLE ENCOURAGEMENT OF FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND HAD SOMETIMES BEEN CRITICIZED GRIEVOUSLY FOR THIS.

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6. COMMENT: CONGRESSIONAL SOURCES TELL US THAT THE ONLY MAJOR PIECE OF LEGISLATION PENDING IS THE PROPOSED PATENT LAW. WHILE THIS IN ITSELF IS CONTROVERSIAL, AT LEAST IT IS NOT A COMPLETE SURPRISE. OTHER ITEMS ARE SAID TO BE MOSTLY UNFINISHED BUSINESS OR A ROUTINE NATURE. IF THIS IS TRUE, ECHEVERRIA MAY BE ACTING IN SOMEWHAT BETTER FAITH THAN ALEMAN FEELS.
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